

Socialist Voice

Communist Party of Ireland
Páirtí Cumannach na hÉireann
Partisan Patriotic Internationalist
Number 182 April 2020 €1.50
www.commmunistpartyofireland.ie

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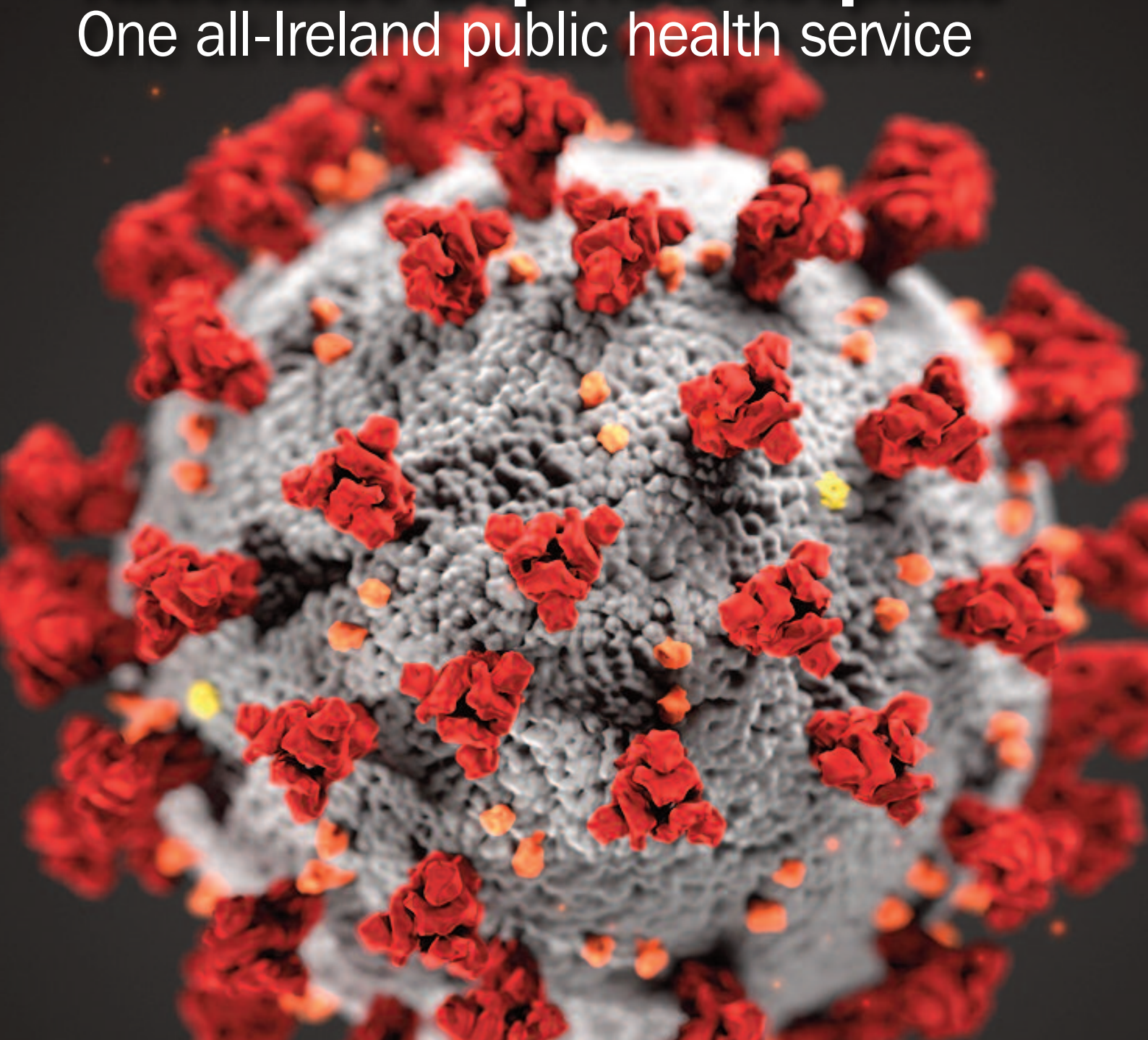
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Nationalise all private hospitals

One all-Ireland public health service



CORONAVIRUS

The covid-19 pandemic now sweeping the globe has exposed the underlying weaknesses and inequalities in many societies, particularly here in Ireland.

Global debt stands at \$250 trillion, with corporate debt already enormous, while trillions of dollars are swirling round in stock markets and in tax havens, stashed away by powerful individuals and corporations. Arising from the financial crisis of 2008–10, the Irish state took on 42 per cent of all EU banking debt. We all know the price we have paid for that.

Health, and access to it on an equal basis, is an absolute necessity and a basic human right. But we know that this has not been recognised in reality. From Derry to Kerry, working people have been

standing in queues waiting to be seen, to have symptoms diagnosed or to be treated.

Waiting-lists continue to increase while at the same time we witness the growth of private medicine and medical corporations and the tendering out of health services, causing the loss of jobs and further enriching private interests—a strategy that has given priority to the interests of private wealth over the public good. Private medical facilities are now waiting in the wings to demand more from the public purse because of the covid-19 threat. As covid-19 has revealed, the public good is not compatible with private corporate profit.

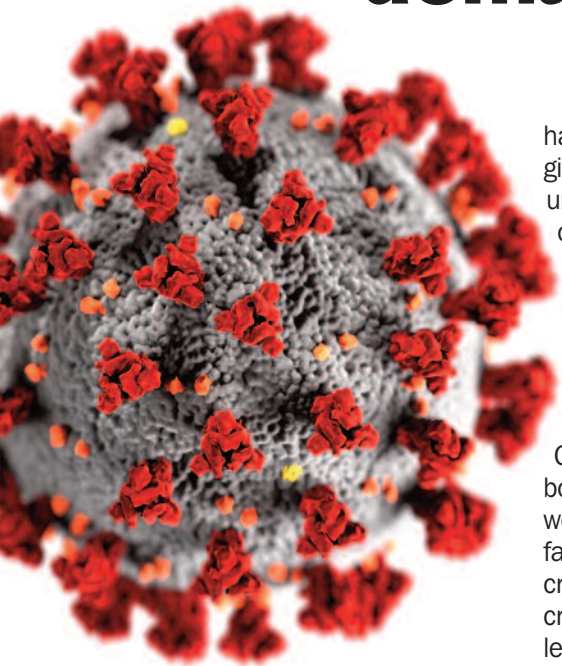
Since 2011 the EU has made sixty-three individual demands on

member-states to cut spending on the health service and to privatise or outsource services to meet arbitrary debt and deficit budgets, under the terms of the Growth and Stability Pact, first entered into in 1997. After the global financial crash of 2008 this agreement was beefed up and further strengthened in 2011 and 2013, making the national budgets of member-states subject to the scrutiny of Brussels.

As a direct result, Italy now has 4.1 doctors per 1,000 citizens, a drop from 5.83 per 1,000. As a result, its health service, once rated the best in Europe, has been overwhelmed by the covid-19 crisis.

Ireland, with 25 per cent fewer doctors, is even less prepared, with only

The covid crisis demands a new beginning



harm the coronavirus will do it has also given Fine Gael a lift. A campaign is now under way to keep Leo Varadkar and his cronies in situ. Even the electorally rejected Regina Doherty has been resurrected to maintain continuity with the old regime.

A week is a long time in politics, Harold Wilson said; and the attempted rehabilitation of Varadkar and his Government colleagues has certainly borne that out. If we didn't know better we could be misled into overlooking the fact that these are the same people who created a homelessness and housing crisis, caused half a million people to be left waiting for a hospital appointment, made the cost of child care unaffordable, and inflicted cruel austerity on working communities.

Of course we know they haven't changed. These high priests of capitalism are merely practising what their peers have done for centuries. They are carrying out whatever steps they consider necessary to preserve their position of privilege and power.

Undoubtedly the Dublin government, even with its dubious mandate, has performed better than the sociopaths in

Downing Street, not to mention the hapless, impotent Castlereagh Parish Council, otherwise known as the Northern Ireland Assembly. In reality, it wouldn't have been difficult to better either lot.

Though warned by the WHO in mid-January of an imminent pandemic, the British government stalled. Boris Johnson and his adviser Dominic Cummings were concerned that large-scale state intervention during a health crisis might encourage too many working people to reflect on their circumstances. Surely something similar could be done to address other difficulties, such as unemployment, poverty, and homelessness?

To avoid this threat to capital they were willing to risk lives. However, panic overtook them when the world-renowned British epidemiologist Neil Ferguson calculated a mortality rate of more than a quarter of a million if they persisted with their "herd immunity" policy.* With possible casualty numbers that high, the stability of the state would be endangered, and hence the policy reversal.

A more vulgar and traditional calculation featured in Stormont's response to the crisis. Backed into a corner by Michelle O'Neill's overnight U-turn in relation to school closures, Arlene Foster responded by stubbornly rejecting any option other than mirroring the madcap plans of Johnson and Cummings.

TOMMY MCKEARNEY

PEOPLE OF Ireland, all is well! Your Taoiseach loves you. Wasn't this what he told us in his St Patrick's Day address to the nation (that part of it living south of the border)? His concerned yet confident demeanour was so reassuring and inspiring that the Blueshirts are showing a degree of confidence not seen since long before the general election. Alongside the other



If this pandemic shows us anything it is that it knows no borders, be they physical ones, as with the partition of our country by Britain, or economic ones

3.1 doctors per 1,000 citizens, though this is slightly better than Britain, whose National Health Service has only 2.8 doctors per 1,000 citizens. This will have huge implications for our people in the North, where more than 280,000 people are on waiting-lists, more than 21,000 of them waiting more than a year for inpatient treatment.

Meantime Cuba, despite suffering sixty years of illegal blockade, can manage to provide 8.2 doctors per 1,000 citizens. The difference is that Cuba gives priority to the health and education of the citizens, not to the profits of a corporate elite. With much of the economy of Cuba state-owned, profits can be redirected to the common good.

Whatever one's view on the constitutional question, Ireland is a single island. The need to deal with a contagious, rapidly spreading virus on an all-Ireland basis is clearly a matter of basic common sense. Coming so closely on the heels of the report into the RHI fiasco, Stormont's inept and disjointed handling of the coronavirus crisis only further undermines the viability of a six-county political entity toadying to an indifferent British ruling class.

In the global context, this crisis is not only creating a frightening threat to human health: it is also posing fundamental questions and indeed dilemmas for free-market capitalism and its political system. To cope with the emergency it has become obvious that it is necessary to employ the resources of the capitalist state on a scale and in ways unimaginable to neo-liberals even a few short weeks ago. With unemployment rising rapidly, incomes are being cut dramatically, and consequently people's ability to pay for day-to-day needs is diminishing.

While the Irish government has taken steps to address this, it will be forced to go even further as the crisis intensifies. Pressure will increase to make provision for people meeting rent or mortgage payments as well as covering food bills, utility bills, and other essentials, such as clothing and sanitary or hygiene goods. This will pose a serious challenge for a neo-liberal free-market economic system.

There are 11,160 public hospital beds in Ireland. In addition to this there are 4,400 private beds—2,460 of these in public hospitals. All these beds should be nationalised and put into the public health system, thus increasing the number of beds in the public system by 40 per cent.

If this pandemic shows us anything it is that it knows no borders, be they physical ones, as with the partition of our country by Britain, or economic ones. The strategy of the British government regarding covid-19 has placed our people in the North and, by extension, throughout the country at risk and in greater danger. The powerless Stormont Executive has been wringing its hands, unable to break with the British

How will it all be paid for, and by whom? Their preferred answer—another, intensified bout of austerity—would surely be resisted by the people.

The ruling class everywhere is worried, and not necessarily about virus contagion. What lessons will be drawn from this situation by the wider population? What if workers demand a similar level of state intervention across the board when the crisis ends?

It is no accident, therefore, that one of the first measures taken by the Varadkar government was to legislate for an extension of policing powers and to increase Garda numbers on the streets, even drawing on recruits from the Training Depot. Fine Gael may have discovered a polished PR skill but hasn't departed far from its roots.

The social system provided by free-market capitalism has proved itself incapable of dealing with covid-19. This is a massive system failure that cannot easily be disguised. Think for a moment about a happening in the United States. Andrew Cuomo, governor of New York State (and definitely not a socialist), has been calling on the federal government to nationalise the production of personal protection equipment. Not quite revolution but an indication, nevertheless, of changing conditions.

Think also about a comment by the political activist Paul O'Connell. He recently wrote that if the broad left

government's strategy.

Partition has failed our people politically, economically, and now in health. Partition will literally cause the loss of many lives, north and south. Covid-19 does not recognise borders. We can only fight it properly with an all-Ireland strategy, with the maximum use of all medical services available in the whole country. No public money should be given to private medical facilities during this crisis.

- We need a universal free public health service for the whole of Ireland.
- We need to nationalise all private hospitals and clinics throughout Ireland.
- We need to cancel payment of the odious debt. ★

does not soon articulate a vision of how we respond to covid-19 and shape the post-crisis landscape, the novel and radical interventions being introduced now will simply serve to consolidate existing power relations: everything changing so that nothing changes.

This is the challenge. Without question, we must concentrate on addressing the immediate threat posed by covid-19. Nevertheless it is crucial that we look beyond the immediate and consider this crisis not opportunistically but as something demanding a new beginning, with different structures.

The political system built upon capitalist free-market economics has been forced to adopt interventionist measures in order to save itself. In time this will succeed in controlling the pandemic. Thereafter, though, we have to emphasise this fact and reinforce the message that other, long-running problems, in housing, health, and poverty, can also be successfully addressed.

Let there be no misunderstanding, though: this will not be brought about through the capitalist state system that we have in Ireland, north and south, today. Implementing such a programme for working people requires a structured and calculated socialist people's programme managed from within a socialist state, the Workers' Republic. ★

COVID-19 CRISIS



The capitalist mode of destruction

Eoghan O'Neill on the great global crises (they come in threes)

ON THURSDAY 12 March many of us watched Leo Varadkar announce (in Washington) “the closure of schools, pre-schools and further and higher education settings for a period until 29 March 2020, to support efforts to contain the spread of covid-19.”

No-one was prepared for the abrupt adjustments that we as a society have had to make. What began in China a number of months ago has now swept across the globe, forcing most countries to restrict movement across borders and cease non-essential economic activities. It is estimated that 1.7 billion people in the world are now living under some form of confinement,¹ and this number has the potential to increase even further. While efforts to contain the virus and slow down the number of infections

are continuing day by day, week by week, the lives of more and more people have come to a standstill, waiting out the storm.

At this point the length and severity of the pandemic is still unknown, and therefore many of us are just lying low, waiting for that famous curve to flatten so we can get back to normality—a normality that, in the middle of this spring season, was once the only norm we could envisage, where routine and custom would repeat for another year.

All this has changed; but perhaps that is what was needed. We now have three global crises converging, which will stretch humanity’s resilience to the limit. All are interrelated, and all have their origin within the capitalist mode of production, with its insatiable drive for profit.

The global pandemic, the global recession and the global emergency that we are experiencing stem from the capitalist mode of production, which is the dominant mode of production on this planet.

Climate change has been well documented and has been studied for decades. (My previous article in the March issue covers this.) Year after year, as warning signs and alarm bells were being triggered, governments around the world failed to take any serious collective action to try to transition economies to more environmentally sustainable ones, the reason being that capitalist economies cannot function without expanding growth—the covid-19 crisis has proved that. With the necessity of capitalist growth, more land, more resources and more labour have to be exploited.

With profit incentives for the industrialisation of agriculture and monocrops, and the urban sprawl for human settlement, the devastation of nature and the destruction of the habitats of many species are an inevitable result. This destruction of nature means that humans “are creating the conditions for the spread of diseases by reducing the natural barriers between host animals—in which the virus is naturally circulating—and themselves . . . We fully expect the arrival of pandemic influenza; we can expect large-scale human mortalities.”²

These are the consequences we face when we fail to act on the global environmental emergency and continue to destroy our natural world. Who knows how many more outbreaks will be unleashed in the coming years, and the further crises they may cause? And we are the ones who will have to pick up the tab for those who profit from the existing system. That is why we should no longer think of capitalism as a mode of production—because the system is no longer a net producer: on a global scale it is destroying more than it can produce or replenish and so should be labelled the capitalist mode of destruction.

What we know is that the covid-19 pandemic is accelerating what some economists are predicting will be the “greatest depression” in living memory. “The financial crisis and Great

The Covid-19 pandemic is giving us an insight into the types of crisis that will become more common . . .

Depression took three years to play out,” a headline in the *Guardian* reads; “this crisis has taken three weeks.”³

All economic indicators have plunged to what is being described as an I-shaped downturn, the absolute plummeting of financial markets and the real economy. This is illustrated in the graph of the purchasing managers’ index (PMI), showing “the economic activity indicators which are recording all-time lows of contraction for March.”⁴

However, the global capitalist economy was already in decline, and a recession was forecast to hit in 2020; it’s just that the pandemic has caused economies to collapse much faster and to have a wider reach than expected.



▲ Composite PMI, United States (to March 2020)

The covid-19 pandemic is giving us an insight into the types of crisis that will become more common because of the global environmental emergency and the changes to the Earth System ushered in by the capitalist mode of destruction. These may range from pandemics to weather crises, such as the fires in Australia and extreme snow events, all of which have the ability to fundamentally affect supply chains for food and water and other essential goods. It is the sheer scale and frequency of crises that we will have to plan for and manage.

Ironically, where governments have been successful in dealing with the pandemic it has been in socialist countries, where the state has acted in a planned and organised manner, taking the necessary measures to shut down the economy in order to save lives, rather than to save the interests of the capitalist class, as is done in capitalist countries.

What has been clearly revealed to many people through their lived

experience, all over the globe, is the obvious failure of capitalism to meet the challenge of the crisis.

So we have seen an increase everywhere in governments intervening in the economy, from nationalising health services to planning and directing production, trying to resolve the unfolding crisis. However, they do so with half measures, with one eye on the crisis and one on the economy. By doing so they will prolong people’s seclusion, thereby stretching essential services to breaking-point, increasing the mortality rate in each country, and so further deepen the impact of recession.

Once again it has not only revealed

the anarchic nature of the system but even in such a dire crisis as this they are putting their very short-term interests before anyone and anything else.

Moreover, it has exposed the myth of the supremacy of the market in meeting our collective human needs, as we witness profit-seekers in every industry implementing insidious practices, such as price-gouging on essential goods and services and the laying off of large sections of their work force without any protection or compensation. Big Pharma is stunting the collective research and study to find medicines and vaccines for the virus by seeking to create patents for profit.

The crisis has also revealed to people what a decade or more of cuts in funding, recruitment, pay and conditions will do to essential services, such as health.

However, this is not just a crisis in the health service and our ability and resources to deal with this particular crisis but reveals a fundamental lack of investment and downgrading of the public system as a whole, including

health, housing, education, and welfare. The virus has exposed our vulnerability to mass illness; but we also know that there already existed a crisis in our public systems before this pandemic, resulting from the austerity policies that governments have been implementing since the great recession of 2008.

Their strategy remains as a planned policy of hoodwinking people to push them towards a private-service model, whether that be through a private-rental housing market, dominated by vulture and monopoly funds buying up housing stock, private health, increased costs in education, or privatised child care. In times of crisis, when the private market cannot function, we see a settlement made by the private sector to be taken over by the state.

The state, however, is not an arbitrary actor: it is an instrument of class rule, whereby the arms of the state protect the interests of the ruling class.

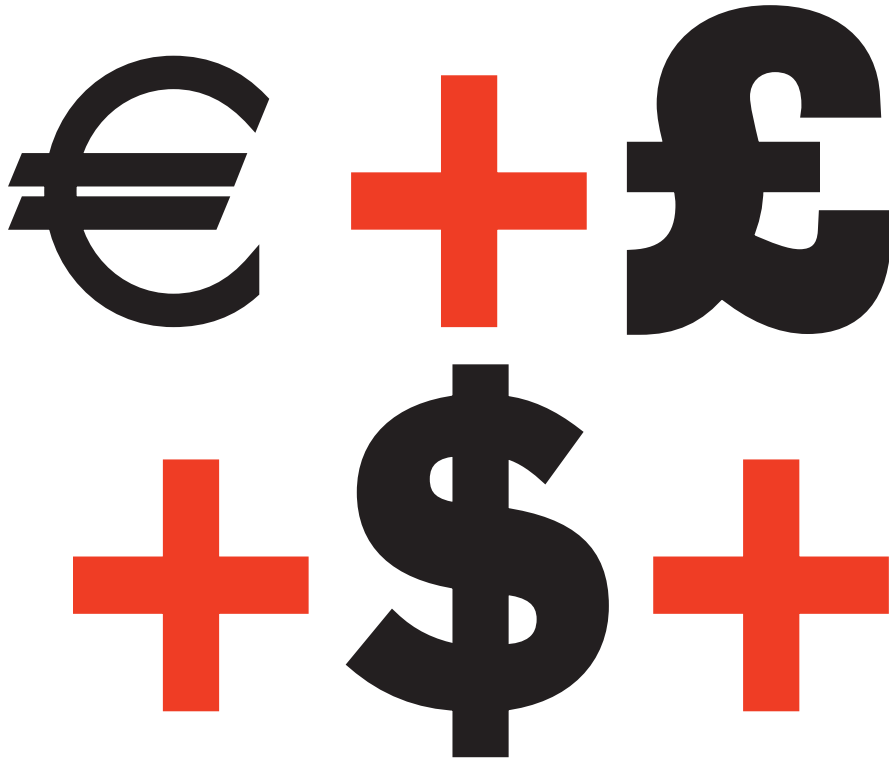
Nationalising under the capitalist mode of production, especially when directed by capitalist governments, is not a transitioning of the economy towards a socialist mode of production, as some on the left would have us believe, but a calculated policy of the ruling class to protect their private interests and place the burden on the taxpayer in times of crisis.

Key industries get massive bail-outs, using public funds, yet the shareholders will still receive their expected dividends, and in time the industry will be sold back at fire-sale prices, a practice we saw following the great recession. In other words, the public will take on all the risk while the private owners reap all the rewards.

Yet the crisis has revealed that those who we truly value and need most are the workers in health, retail, child care, education, and cleaning (among others) and not those who live off the labour of others: the landlords, the capitalist owners, the shareholders, and all those who seek to profit from this health crisis. The wealthiest people on this planet, the billionaires and their companies, are either hiding out in luxurious bunkers or asking for bail-outs from the public purse.

CONTINUED OVERLEAF

CLASS & CORONAVIRUS



The trade union movement must not compromise on “social partnership” after this pandemic is over argues **Jimmy Doran**

IT IS NOT OUR class that must compromise but the ruling class, as the failure of capitalism has been exposed beyond all doubt as a result of the covid-19 pandemic.

Social partnership is not the answer to this crisis. Social partnership is simply for fulfilling the needs of capital when it suits, facilitated by a subservient section of the trade union

movement. It is social betrayal, not partnership; the only partnership is among the elite and the corporations, continuously forcing the working class to an ever-decreasing share of the wealth we produce.

There will be no return to the same old same old when we come out of this pandemic. We must return to our traditional trade union roots, to where we were founded, to fight for workers’ rights and our class interests.

We must build the people’s resistance. There is no crisis that capitalism cannot solve so long as the working class pay for it. We paid for the last crisis—a €64 billion bail-out of banks. We will not pay for this one.

The banks were put in public ownership to get the capitalist class out of the global financial crash in 2008, forcing Irish citizens to pay 42 per cent of European banking debt. As soon as these banks became profitable again the Irish ruling class began selling them back to the capitalist class—their own class, at whose behest they rule. This was a massive seizing of wealth, a betrayal and robbery of the Irish working class, and it must be reversed. These profits should be reinvested for the common good.

During the health pandemic, private hospitals are now in state control—in recognition that private health and the two-tier health system are not fit for purpose.

CONTINUED The capitalist mode of destruction

All of a sudden the people’s attention has been turned towards how the system actually functions and how it is geared towards protecting the interests of the ruling class, which no propaganda can hide. The next global economic crisis is now under way. The Marxist economist Michael Roberts states that “the world economy was already slowing down towards a new slump before COVID-19 hit. The pandemic was a trigger that exposed the underlying flaws in the capitalist mode of production. Production, investment and employment under capitalism undergo recurring

crises that lead to periodic slumps which destroy the livelihoods (and lives) of billions.”⁵

The three major global crises that are now accelerating are interrelated within the capitalist mode of destruction, and each one is potentially devastating for the strata of the working class and oppressed people, not on their own but all coming at once or in quick succession. Our ability to counter these crises, given the current policies and popular ideas lying around, will be catastrophic for all working people, their families and communities.

Do not be fooled by them. This pandemic is not the source of the economic crisis, nor is it to be racially placed at the door of the Chinese. It is a direct result of centuries of capitalist

development, of booms and busts and the increasing destruction of the natural world, with the exploitation and urbanising of the global working and oppressed people. If extreme weather, a pandemic and a global depression were to happen all at once it could very well trigger a collapse of civilisation.

This is a wake-up call to humanity to take collective action and to seek to permanently change from the private (market, capitalist) mode to a public (planned, socialist) mode of production, where the ownership of the means of production is held in common by all citizens, each one of us being a shareholder in the development of our country.

A temporary compromise to appease private capital will achieve nothing for

We need class solidarity against the capitalist class, which has created a world with levels of inequality never known before. When the working class emerge after this crisis, capitalism will have nowhere to hide.

Exposed by the pandemic, capitalism has had to compromise with the working class and bring all private beds into public use, which amounts to a 40 per cent increase in the number of hospital beds.

This is the enormity of what they are hoarding for their class. If wealthy sufferers from the virus were getting fast-tracked into exclusive health services during the pandemic, the ruling class would have a revolt on their hands.

But this was a forced compromise: it was not a gesture of good will. It is mealy-mouthed in the extreme.

Despite what some on the left are saying, the private health service has not been nationalised: it has been rented, on loan to the state on a non-profit basis, whereby the state will pay all the wages and costs of the private health system for the duration of the pandemic.

Only when there is an all-Ireland, universally accessible public health service will capacity ever be sufficient to serve all the needs of all our people. The two-tier, two-jurisdiction health system guarantees that the wealthy get proper care when they need it while the rest of us join the waiting-list. The bare minimum of public beds is provided to keep a lid on society.

The bail-out in this crisis is once again for the capitalist class, disguised as a wage compensation scheme and a

ban on evictions. By giving the workers affected by the pandemic a proportion of their wages and a delay on rent or mortgage payments, this will guarantee at the end of the crisis that people will come out of their isolation not with mounting debt but with the ability to go out and kick-start the consumer economy, and pay back the rents to the landlords—with interest, no doubt.

It is pressing the pause button on the economy in the interests of business and landlords so they can get back to normal after the crisis. This is a bail-out of business and landlords, paid for by the taxpayer.

If the state provided a decent, universally accessible public housing service as a right to all citizens we would not be faced with the crisis in housing in the middle of the pandemic. The state would own the asset; of course it would deny the property-owning class their profits and wealth.

Precarious employment has been exposed as the insecure disaster that it is; any sort of an economic change and it all comes tumbling down. This happens daily, and goes largely unnoticed; but during the pandemic it is widespread, when most of these jobs folded at the same time, exposing the unsustainability of this model on a grand scale.

There is no doubt that “social partnership” and the need for us all to put on the green jersey will be

proclaimed as the only way to recover from this disaster. We need class solidarity against the capitalist class, which has created a world with levels of inequality never known before.

When the working class emerge after this crisis, capitalism will have nowhere to hide. It has never been so clear that it serves only one class, to the detriment of the other; as Karl Marx wrote, “accumulation of wealth at one pole is at the same time accumulation of misery, agony, toil, slavery, ignorance, brutality, mental degradation, at the opposite pole.”

Private banking, health services, rented accommodation and precarious employment only work in the interest of one class, that is, the owners of capital, and totally fail the working class. The system is working as it was designed to do.

Social partnership will only ever serve that class. Socialism transfers the ownership of capital to the working class, where it will transform society and serve everyone, not a tiny elite.

“Our country is not just Cuba: our country is humanity,” Fidel Castro said. We have seen this time and time again during the pandemic. Despite the limited resources of Cuba and an economic blockade by the United States for more than sixty years they have never lost that humanity and are always willing to share their meagre resources. ★

the working strata but in fact, as the last recession demonstrates, where the Irish state took on 42 per cent of all EU banking debt, will further make the people pay for the crisis of capitalism and its benefactors.

We must not settle for temporary appeasements but in fact must strive to transform these policies from temporary arrangements to permanent solutions in our own interest. We cannot depend on any government to do this: it must come from a popular movement, awakened by the new reality and led by a class-conscious movement unwilling to capitulate to private vested interests.

To equip ourselves for the struggles ahead, given the reality of the three global crises unfolding before us, the following can become the centres of

struggle for popularising working-class demands among the working strata, with the ultimate goal of ending the capitalist mode of destruction once and for all.

1 All-Ireland Universal Public Plan

Funding and expanding universal health, housing, education, welfare and infrastructure systems.

2 All-Ireland Environmental Plan

A united and strategic approach for a rapid transition to an environmentally sustainable economy.

3 All-Ireland Industrial and Financial Plan

A strategy whereby the full-scale nationalisation of banks and industry is created for full employment, in line with the environmental plan.

1 *Michael Roberts Blog*, “Lockdown!” 24 March 2020

(<https://tinyurl.com/jntr3uk>).

2 John Vidal, “‘Tip of the iceberg’: Is our destruction of nature responsible for covid-19?” *Guardian* (London), 18 March 2020

(<https://tinyurl.com/u9suffv>)

3 Nouriel Roubini, “Coronavirus pandemic has delivered the fastest, deepest economic shock in history,” *Guardian* (London), 25 March 2020 (<https://tinyurl.com/v7we8cm>)

4 *Michael Roberts Blog*, “Lockdown!” 24 March 2020

(<https://tinyurl.com/jntr3uk>).

5 Cihan Aksan and Jon Bailes, “COVID-19 and capitalism,” *State of Nature*, 27 March 2020

(<https://tinyurl.com/uqtq672>).

The world we all knew is gone, a new one has yet to be born

“It is easier to imagine an end to the world than an end to capitalism.”

Fredric Jameson

DÓNAL Ó COISDEALBHA

THE GLOBAL coronavirus pandemic has spread across the world, leaving incalculable, indescribable tragedy in its wake. The lives of every human being on the planet are being today, or will soon be, somehow touched by this disaster.

It is one of the most significant events of our lifetimes, a moment in history that will never be forgotten by those who live through it; and yet the subject of this article is not covid-19, because such are the extraordinary times we are living in that even this will be overshadowed in the record of history by another dramatic process, not biological but economic and now rapidly unfolding before us: the Second Great Depression.

The cause of this depression will not have been the covid-19 virus—contrary to everything that you will read in the press in the months to come. The virus was simply the tipping-point, exposing the massive vulnerabilities of the privatised market economies of Europe and the United States. That is to say that capitalism’s laws of motion remain fully intact today, and it is these laws that make it a uniquely vulnerable system of economic organisation when faced with great social challenges, such as climate change or a pandemic, especially in its present, late stage of development.

As I write this, on the morning of 16 March, global stock markets are again crashing, with the Irish ISEQ

Index down more than 12 per cent, bringing its total losses to 36 per cent from its peak in mid-February. The dumping of stocks today is not like 2008, however. Whereas that recession represented a significant breakdown in the global financial system, today that same system is entering what I believe to be a final endgame for the present dominant economic model.

Let me explain the background to my conclusion. Marx recognised that capitalists invest for a single reason: to turn a profit, not to satisfy consumer demands or for any other reason. He further understood that the process of capital accumulation that this implied had, in a competitive market economy, an important implication: the rate of profit within a given industry falls as automation replaces living labourers in the production process.

This loss of added value from production (what Marx called *surplus value*, extracted from the labourers’ time) leads to surpluses of capital building up, as productive investment looks unattractive from the viewpoint of the owners of the means of production—for that is what uninvested profits are: surpluses.

In the decades before the great financial crisis of 2008 it was the level of global industrial overcapacity, the surpluses that it created and the search for safe places to park all the money that led to accelerating inward flows into government bonds, particularly those of the United States (the ultimate “safe haven” asset), driving down the rate of interest that you receive for holding the bonds. Those investors in Europe and the United States who wanted to escape from these falling interest rates looked to other assets in which to store their

savings, particularly housing bonds and the related Byzantine financial products in which they were bought and sold, creating the bubbles that finally burst in the financial crisis.

The problems of the 1970s Keynesian version of capitalism had been temporarily fixed in the decades that followed by the restoration of the aggregate profitability of investment by means of the process of globalisation; but in the end Marx’s Law of Value reasserted itself, as it always must.

Extraordinary measures were needed to save the system; and, after the collapse of Lehman Brothers, they were taken. It fell to the capitalist states to bail out the financial sector of their economies. Regulation on banking was increased, and the system was put on life support; but the underlying problems all remained.

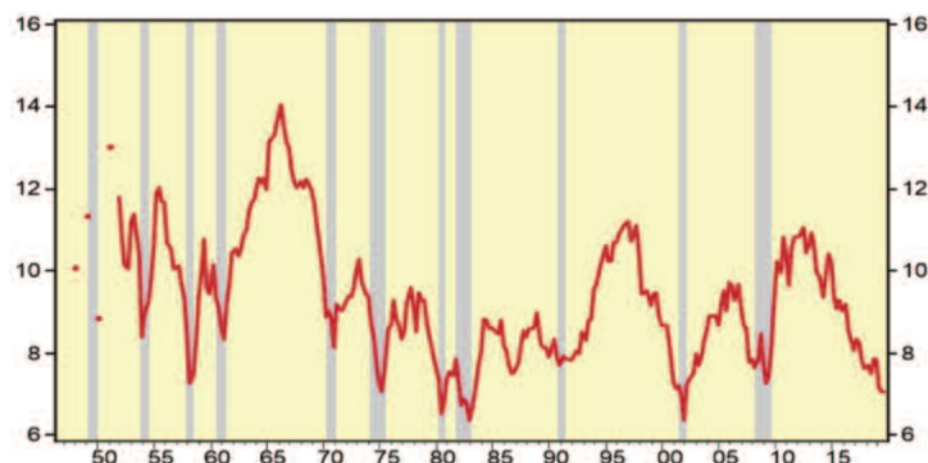
In the following years markets became increasingly monopolised as a means of shoring up profitability while interest rates on government bonds turned negative around the world as the surpluses kept piling up. The “hunt for yield” continued into other areas of the economy, notably bonds issued to finance the most chronically unprofitable businesses in the private sector.

Fast forward to 2019, and many of the world’s economies were already coming to a stop, with contracting national output and investment. Many others, including major ones such as Germany, were on the brink of doing so. A recession was coming, regardless of external shocks, simply because the situation was untenable, as can be seen when company earnings are plotted against capital investment, in the United States for example

The financial engineering



The financial engineering undertaken by central banks to save the financial system over a decade ago is an aggravating factor—but not the root cause—of the depression that we are now entering.



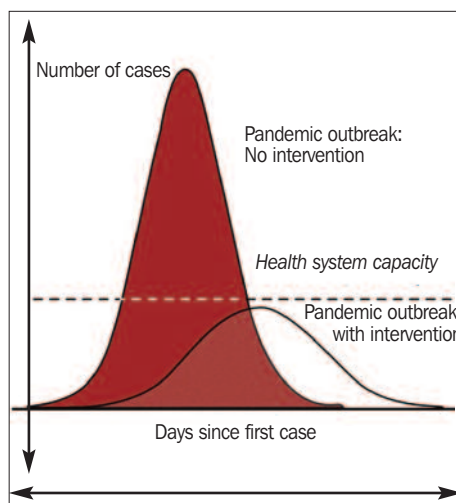
Debt as percentage of fixed assets, domestic non-financial corporations Source: Haver Analytics

undertaken by central banks to save the financial system over a decade ago is an aggravating factor—but not the root cause—of the depression that we are now entering. The root causes of the present crisis are to be found in capitalism’s own laws of motion, which cannot, regardless of the situation, allow for the suspension of capital accumulation for more than a token period. This is the reason that governments in the United States and Europe cannot fully shut down production for many weeks on end, as was done in the Hubei province of China; their bosses, the owners of the private sector of their economies, won’t let them.

The two curves

This brings us to the primary contradiction of the moment. Scientists and health professionals tell us every day of the urgency of “flattening the curve”—that is to say, enforcing social distancing in order to slow the spread of the virus in a way that does not overwhelm the capacity of health services. The implication of this strategy is that for weeks, and perhaps many months, economic output must grind to a near-complete halt. The work-place is a site where the virus can spread, and therefore the resumption of work implies a breach of social distancing.

Italy and Spain, at the time of writing, are the two countries that have instituted mass quarantines to attempt to slow the spread of the virus; but both these countries’ governments insist that their population continue to go to work each day.



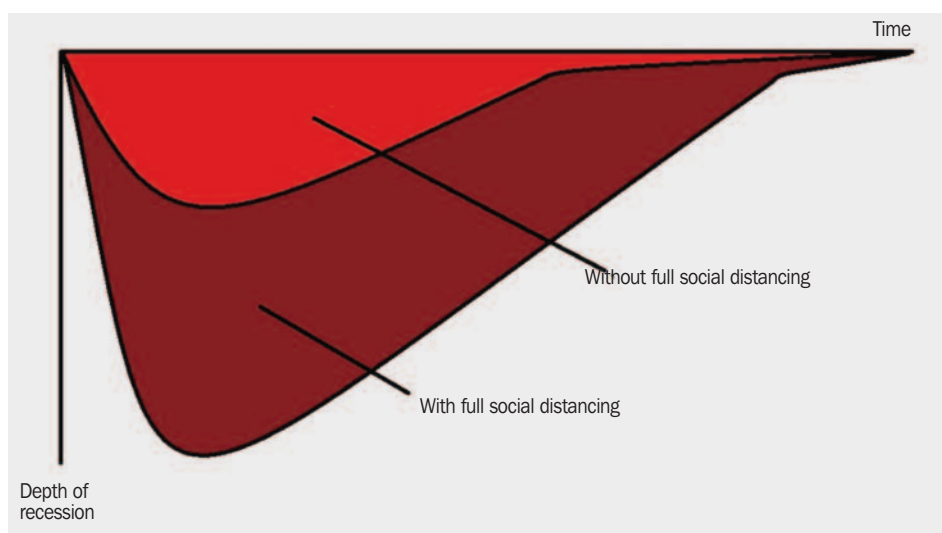
at the same time continuing to meet fixed and variable costs than they can transfer their business to the moon.

This is why the emphasis remains on flattening the “recession curve” by directly opposing the advice of the scientific and medical community and insisting on “keeping the economy going” to avoid a deep recession.

While this immediate concern for the viability of their businesses must be the greatest priority of the ownership class and their political spokespeople, it stands in direct contradiction to the interests of the working class and of all humanity; hence the first labour strikes that have been observed in the United States, Italy and the Basque Country, as workers refuse to keep firms open under conditions of the pandemic.

Keep the economy going!

This brings us to the nub of the issue. Every attempt to “keep the economy going” is doomed. In desperation, the governments of Europe and the United States have begun to adopt differing strategies to save the economic base of their system. What we could call the



Flattening the curve

The primary reason for this incomprehension and inability to act decisively is that the bosses of the private sector have their own curve: the recession curve.

Regardless of how they might personally feel, the owner of a capitalist firm can no more agree to close down for several months while

Macron model, now adopted in France, is to underwrite the entire private sector and pledge that the state will act in the name of all capitalist firms to guarantee that “not a single one” will be allowed to go bankrupt.

CONTINUED

SOLIDARITY



Cuba's medical internationalism

“Whoever cannot fight for others will never be sufficiently able to fight for themselves.”
Fidel Castro

GRAHAM HARRINGTON

SINCE 1960, socialist Cuba has sent 400,000 doctors and nurses to more than 164 countries to share their medical expertise. Internationalism has been a part of the Cuban Revolution since its earliest days. As far back as 1960, Cuba sent doctors to Valdivia in Chile after an earthquake killed thousands of people.

Cuba's health system is world-famous for its efficiency. Cuba has more doctors per head of population than any other country in the world,

and ranks higher than most “developed” countries on life expectancy and infant mortality. Cuba's health system concentrates on preventive care, with doctors and nurses living among their patients.

Literally from cradle to grave, Cubans do not pay a cent for health services. This has meant that Cuba's biggest export, ahead of tourism, is now its thriving biotechnology industry, which has developed lung cancer vaccines and eliminated mother-child HIV transmission. This is all despite the illegal blockade against Cuba.

Economy Continued

The second emerging model in Europe is what we can call the Scandinavian model, which amounts to collective bargaining agreements between the state, trade unions, and employers' associations. The state will pay 50–80 per cent of workers' salaries and the private owners will pay the remainder. Overnight they have transformed themselves half way to being the Soviet Union—except that the private sector will keep all proceeds of business, and the state (read: the workers) will bear the additional cost of maintaining the private sector's cash flow.

In my opinion, the Macron model necessarily leads to something like the Scandinavian model, which necessarily leads to either full nationalisation of the economy or a full economic collapse. It will be impossible to underwrite the private sector without bailing them out, and bailing them out will in turn be impossible to sustain for more than a few weeks. I believe that, when the moment comes, they will balk at full nationalisation of the private sector and instead try, and fail, to prop up individual private businesses and industries.

Furthermore, central banks that directly finance private businesses will be taking on corporate credit risk—something unthinkable only a week

ago. This would require the creating of currency to cover corporate losses and contribute to enormous fiscal deficits, with consequences that are hard to predict.

Fiscal stimulus

Another probable response to the crisis will be the introduction of a universal basic income, or some variation of this policy, in an attempt to shore up collapsing demand.

Sections of the left have joined the ever-growing chorus for such a policy to be speedily implemented. I see this as opportunist, not well considered, and I don't agree with it. Recessions are not simply an expression of collapsing demand: they are also characterised by



Cuba's biggest export, ahead of tourism, is now its thriving biotechnology industry, which has developed lung cancer vaccines and eliminated mother-child HIV transmission.

Cuba has always taken the approach that it is willing to provide assistance to the people of any country, regardless of its relations with their government. Whether it was the right-wing Somoza dictatorship in Nicaragua after the 1972 earthquake or the socialist government in Angola, Cuba has always been prepared to help the people of any country, even when their governments do not reciprocate. After Hurricane Katrina, Cuba even offered assistance to the US government. (It was refused.)

It would take far too long to list every example of Cuba's internationalist missions. An important example was the mission in Angola, where the MPLA were fighting for liberation against Western-backed mercenaries and apartheid South Africa. Cuba provided not just medical volunteers, teachers and construction workers but also internationalist combatants, more than 2,000 of whom would be killed.

After the Chernobyl incident Cuba took in 26,000 people, the great majority of them children, and gave them free health services, education, and shelter, even after the end of the Soviet Union.

The Latin American School of Medicine trains medical personnel from all over the world, the majority from poor backgrounds, including black Americans, who would not be able to get a medical education in their own country. All the state asks in return is that the qualified doctors go back to

collapsing supply. This is what we are seeing at the moment with European and other trading partners shutting down and, in the next few weeks, with ever-greater strain being placed on sources of supply that are already constricted.

When billions of euros or dollars in aggregate demand for consumer goods are put into economies characterised by severely restrained supply, the half-empty supermarkets will not be capable of absorbing it, and the results will be predictable and tragic for the working class.

Next steps

Based on the analysis above, I think we are heading into the greatest

their own communities and provide medical care for those who need it, as opposed to who can pay the most.

When Hugo Chávez became president of Venezuela, 70 per cent of the people lacked regular medical care. As part of the health policies of the Bolivarian Revolution, tens of thousands of Cuban health workers poured into the poor barrios of Venezuela. They were nicknamed the "army of white coats." Of note was Operation Miracle, which allowed blind Venezuelans to travel to Cuba for surgery.

The Cuban medical brigade is named the Henry Reeve Contingent, after an American who fought in Cuba's first War of Independence against Spain. Their expertise is in working in disaster zones and areas affected by serious epidemics. Since its founding in 2005 they have served in Guatemala, Pakistan, Bolivia, Ecuador, East Timor, Brazil, and other countries, as well as Haïti after the disastrous earthquake in 2010.

Fidel Castro said after the Haïtian earthquake that "we send doctors, not soldiers." Incidents have since come to light involving disgraceful conduct by American and other UN soldiers sent to Haïti.

Just as Cuba did after the Ebola outbreak in 2014, when it was the first to respond to the World Health Organization's appeal for medical aid, it has responded to the covid-19 pandemic with absolute selflessness. The image of Cuban medics arriving in

failure of the capitalist mode of production since the Great Depression in the 1930s.

A socialist response to the situation of this moment is the only suitable response. This could be based on more holistic demands, such as these examples:

1 Restructuring the economy so that it is capable of dealing with emergencies such as covid-19 or disasters related to climate change. This means full nationalisation of all essential services and significantly increased funding for relevant sectors. Privately owned firms that are structurally important are an area of major weakness in the economy, as we are now seeing. Workers'

Rome will prove more powerful than any propaganda from the United States. The potential of Cuba's Interferon-2B drug in treating patients only goes to show the inhumanity of the blockade on the world, not just on Cuba.

Cuba's medical internationalism is the direct product of its Revolution and its socialist ethos. During the Revolution the guerillas built support among the peasants by establishing medical clinics and schools. This has been expanded to the point where Cuba is now in a position to share its resources with the oppressed of the world; and now one in every ten Cubans has served in an internationalist mission. This is an achievement not just for Cuba but for every Marxist-Leninist, an example of what we can achieve when we put our ideology into practice.

The insight of Dr Ernesto Che Guevara, that the most important quality for a revolutionary to possess is the love of humanity, could not be better exemplified than by the Henry Reeve Contingent. It is a reminder that there is a better world, an alternative to the misery and poison of capitalism. Cuban medical graduates swear an oath "to serve the revolution unconditionally wherever we are needed, with the premise that true medicine is not that which cures but that which prevents, whether in an isolated community on our island or in any sister country in the world, where we will always be the standard-bearers of solidarity and internationalism." ★

control over crucial areas of goods production, with integrated planning boards made up of producers and consumers themselves and guaranteed by the state, will ensure that, rather than trying to prop up the cash flow of privately owned firms in such situations as this, planning can directly take place, including through sending available food and other supplies to quarantined citizens without monetary inter-mediation.

2 A total freeze on all debt payments, rent, mortgage and utility payments, immediately, with the state then taking control over the vast majority of the provision of housing and other basic services, as rights, not market commodities. ★



Dictatorship: Who decides?

SEÁN Ó MAOLTUILE

“The ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas.”
Karl Marx (1845)

ONCE FROM the pulpit, now from the mass media, the elite of society have always sought to ingrain within us an acceptance of our own subjugation. The ruling classes of the mediaeval world imposed monotheistic religions, such as Christianity and Islam, in order to justify (and extend) their rule, mirroring God’s hierarchical world order. Societies built upon slavery or serfdom could no longer operate alongside the egalitarian nature-based religions that had flourished under primitive-communal modes of social organisation.

As a means of justifying feudal exploitation, Christianity flourished. To

worship a god is a stone’s throw from worshipping a king.

In the modern era, with the bourgeoisie seizing political power from the aristocracy, God has died, having lost his political expediency. The dictatorial rule of the capitalists does not rest on quasi-religious status but on the twin pillars of private property and liberalism. To survive we must increase the wealth of a minority by our labour, receiving a pittance in return. Through their dominance we are convinced that this irrational exploitative system makes sense, that the rule of capital is well founded and fair. So long as we get to vote every few years for which representative of that class signs the legislation further immiserating us, we can call it democracy.

In the twelfth century Pope Adrian IV asked the English monarch to take over Ireland, as our Christianity had become corrupted. From the sixteenth century, entire continents were plundered for resources and labour in the name of

Christianity, by means of genocide and enslavement. Nations not adhering to an acceptable “civilised” religion were fair game for the European powers.

Today it is the nations that attempt to transcend the rule of private property that must be civilised. These countries are invariably called dictatorships; and seen through the eyes of the rich they certainly are.

For American tech companies, the greatest possible democracy prevails in Ireland and Bermuda. Their accumulated wealth can pass through these islands free from taxation and auditing. Celebrating our abundant democracy, having proved ourselves by laundering imperialist profits for forty years, the CEO of Apple, Tim Cook, praised Ireland earlier this year as a land “where the winds of innovation and opportunity blow freely.”

If you’d like to know where the winds of freedom do not blow so freely, look no further than the top enemies of the United States. In China,

Who said that?

DECLAN MCKENNA

“Ironically and cynically, both the US and the European Union impose these sanctions under the guise of protecting human rights when in fact the sanctions always impact negatively on the human rights of the civilian populations. Ireland is complicit in these breaches of international law by virtue of its membership of the European Union and its slavish support for US foreign policy”.
Venezuela Ireland Network and Nicaragua Solidarity Ireland

“Our country does not drop bombs on other peoples . . . our country does not possess nuclear weapons, chemical weapons, or biological weapons. Our country’s tens of thousands of scientists and doctors have been educated in the idea of saving lives”.

Speech by Fidel Castro, 2003

“Unfortunately, the unilateralism of the United States undermines the promotion and protection of human rights of everyone on the planet.”

Cuban minister of foreign affairs, Bruno Rodríguez Parrilla

“After the torture and massacre of civilians, after the targeted attacks upon rescuers, doctors and schools, after the barrel bombs and chemical weapons, it should be hard to believe that there could be a new wave of misery for Syria unleashed by Bashir al-Assad and his Russian and Iranian backers. Yet here it is. The assault on Idlib, the last rebel-held enclave . . .”
The Guardian’s view on Idlib, or how to pack a propaganda punch into one paragraph.

“A propaganda system designed to support the party and state cannot be relied on for accurate information.”

The same Guardian, but referring to China.

“Freedom in capitalist society always remains about the same as it was in the ancient Greek republics: freedom for the slave-owners.”—V. I. Lenin (1917)

corporations and banks are under the supervision and control of the state. In Cuba and the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea the economy is democratically planned for the public good. Rather than allowing a few monopolists to profiteer off basic goods and services, these states ensure that everyone receives the necessities of life, providing universal health services and education alongside low-cost food and housing.

By the capitalist’s vision of democracy, the most heinous dictatorial rule prevails. The rules of the free market are not adhered to: the economy operates in the interests of working people rather than shareholders. Shock, horror!

Venezuela nationalised its oil supply, and soon Hugo Chávez and Nicolás Maduro were branded as the world’s most vicious dictators. Yet despite several coup attempts over the last two decades, none have achieved even remote popular backing. As in Cuba, China, and Korea, the people ever express their faith in the state they themselves have built.

Is communist brainwashing at play? Or perhaps the brainwashing has taken place elsewhere?

It’s no mistake that the world’s most infamous left-wing “dictatorships” have also most effectively dealt with the covid-19 pandemic. It is in fact their ability to deal with such a crisis that has earned them the title of

“communist dictatorship.”

“Authoritarian” China and Cuba are already sending medical teams and supplies across the world, having sufficiently handled the virus at home. Viet Nam has suffered no deaths, as it rationally planned for the crisis, providing for the needs of all in quarantine and isolation.

In the “democratic” West we’ve been told to wash our hands, keep our distance, and pray our landlord doesn’t evict us.

The capitalist state is an appendage of the economy; under socialism the economy is organised by the state. This is the fundamental distinction, in the eyes of the bourgeoisie, between democracy and dictatorship. The capitalist state is free, in the sense that anyone with enough money can buy it. The socialist state is dictatorial, in the sense that it cannot be freely bought and sold but remains in the control of the masses, operating in their interests. If we view the world through the lens of our own class interests we begin to see this reality more clearly.

“Ah, so *Socialist Voice* supports dictatorship!” I hear the liberals cry, reaching for their copy of the *Irish Times* for some pro-democracy reporting. We certainly do! we might reply, to the extent that all states are dictatorships of a particular class; and we uphold the dictatorship of the working class.

In reality, this dictatorship is

democracy for the many against the few, opposed to democracy for the few against the many. These few are becoming fewer and more powerful, and they’re growing increasingly less interested in even a democratic veneer over their dictatorial rule. Wallowing in their own decadence and decay, the kings and churches were forcibly removed from the stage of history, the masses outgrowing their poisonous mode of thought and violently rejecting it. We are living through much the same process. ★

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Above

Wuhan says thanks to medics as they return home after the lockdown ends *China Daily*

“I confess, that countries are pieces on a chessboard upon which is being played out a great game for the domination of the world.”
George Curzon, viceroy of India, 1898

“We condemn the genocidal, cruel, murderous blockade. The blockade violates our human rights.”
Miguel Díaz-Canel Bermúdez, president of Cuba

“If Julian Assange were to succumb to the cruelties heaped upon him, week after week, month after month, year upon year, as doctors warn, newspapers like the Guardian will share the responsibility.”
John Pilger

“Tepid opposition is probably the best that can ultimately be expected.”—Jonathan Cook in *Counterpunch*, on the probable response of the European Union to Trump’s so-called peace plan for Palestine

The rallies are “designed to be the next phase in Sinn Féin’s campaign of intimidation and bullying.”
Leo Varadkar’s disturbing reaction to the concept of public meetings

“We have denounced, as we once again do, the practices of systemic aggression that are replicated against a large part of the peoples and nations of the world, ignoring and transgressing the United Nations Charter and the basic principles for respectful coexistence

between states, and that become evident in our communities with the illegal sanctions, which are aggressions, that the Government of the United States of America continues to apply with impunity against Cuba, Venezuela and Nicaragua. These measures, aggressions, as we all know, threaten the human rights of our peoples”.

Valdrack Jaentschke, Nicaraguan foreign relations adviser to the UN Human Rights Council

“Good job, ambassador. You met the ‘medical’ staff of Al-Qaeda.”
Tweet referring to Kelly Craft, US ambassador to the UN, meeting White Helmets in Turkey ★



A time that called for giants

The great Italian painter and architect Raphael died 500 years ago, in April 1520.

RAPHAEL LIVED at the time of the High Renaissance, one of the most progressive periods in history; as Engels put it, “it was the greatest progressive revolution that mankind has so far experienced, a time which called for giants and produced giants—giants in power of thought, passion, and character, in universality and learning.”

The High Renaissance

The High Renaissance, 1500–1530, was a high point for the visual arts. Even in the turmoil of the Italian wars from 1494 to 1559 the arts did not lose their importance. Florence was the cultural metropolis of the Medici from 1450 to 1494; in the early sixteenth century Rome took over this role.

By the time Renaissance art reached its peak, Italy's economic decline had begun. The Italian bourgeoisie withdrew into banking and usury, investing their capital in land. This ultimately led to a revival of feudal conditions in Italy. Absolutism replaced republican control.

However, the progressive thinkers and artists of the

sixteenth century all remained committed to the defence of the people. Their works appeared in the vernacular and emphasised national and democratic ideals. This made the Italian High Renaissance a significant and unparalleled event.

Raphael

Raffaello Sanzio was born in Urbino in 1483. At the age of seventeen he joined the Perugino workshop. Here he first learnt to give expression to psychological delicacy, which arises with the Renaissance discovery of human beings as this-worldly individuals.

From 1504 to 1508 Raphael worked in Florence. As his fame spread, Pope Julius II called him to Rome. Michelangelo was painting the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel at the time; Leonardo da Vinci was at the height of his creativity. Leonardo and Michelangelo had studied the anatomy of the human body and its movements. They created their compositions from the action and interaction of living bodies and moving faces.

So Raphael went to Rome, at the behest of Julius II, the Warrior Pope. During the Renaissance the popes were not only ecclesiastical leaders but also princes of Roman territories. Julius participated personally in wars, and

They created their compositions from the action and interaction of living bodies and moving faces.



LEFT *The School of Athens*
ABOVE *The Sistine Madonna*

famously stated that he preferred the smell of gunpowder to that of incense. Furthermore, he sought to construct magnificent buildings as witness to his power and that of the Church. In 1509 he commissioned Raphael to decorate some Vatican rooms, with monumental frescoes on ceilings and walls.

The School of Athens

Set in a great architectural illusion, *The School of Athens* portrays an entirely male ancient world. Curiously—as this is the Vatican—modern, Christian thinkers do not appear. Though many of the figures lived at different times, they are shown together as part of the Athens School.

The two main figures, centred under the archway, represent two schools: Plato, to whom Raphael gives Leonardo's features, pointing upwards into the realm of ideas, and his student Aristotle, gesturing to earthly, physical experience. Each of these philosophers holds his book representing his thinking: Plato holds the *Timaeus*, Aristotle his *Ethics*, both in modern binding of Raphael's time. Their clothes support their stance: Plato is dressed in the colours of air and fire, Aristotle in those of earth and water.

The painting divides into two halves along these lines: philosophers, poets and thinkers on Plato's side, physicists, scientists and more empirical thinkers gathered on Aristotle's side. On the left, along with Plato, you can see the Greek philosopher Socrates, Plato's teacher, talking to Athenians.

Socrates famously expounded his philosophical thinking in conversation with people, emphasising arguments on his fingers. In the foreground Pythagoras sits with a book and an inkwell, surrounded by students. Epicurus, shown with a crown of vine leaves, had taught that happiness lies in the pursuit of pleasures arising from freedom from fear and the absence of pain.

On Aristotle's side, Euclid, explaining the laws of geometry with a compass, demonstrates the measurability of actual things. His face is modelled on that of the great architect Bramante, whose design of St Peter's Basilica was based on a geometrical pattern of circles and squares. Raphael was entrusted with the completion of this building after Bramante's death in 1514. The pope permitted German Dominicans to sell indulgences to pay for it, which ultimately helped spark the Protestant Reformation in 1517.

Two figures are placed here in isolation in the foreground. The two philosophers are Diogenes and Heraclitus, the latter being the first great European dialectician, wearing the clothes of a stonemason. Raphael gave him Michelangelo's features.

The great mathematician and astronomer Ptolemy, wearing a yellow robe, holds a terrestrial globe in his hand, facing the Persian Zoroaster, showing a celestial sphere. The young man standing among these scientists, and the only figure looking directly at the viewer, is Raphael himself. Incorporating this self-portrait in a work of such intellectual history was a confident stance for the artist. Placing himself, and the portraits of some of his contemporary artists, in this fresco along with the greatest thinkers in European history elevates the significance of the arts in the High Renaissance.

The Sistine Madonna

Raphael is one of the great discoverers of the feminine in painting. His lifelong preoccupation with the Madonna, which guided him to this subject, the love between human mother and child, indeed one might say ancient mother cults, live on in this theme.

About 1512 or 1513 Raphael created his three large Marian altars, among them the *Sistine Madonna*. In this work Raphael continues to make Mary appear more maternal and human. The model is assumed to be Margherita Luti, the daughter of a Roman baker and Raphael's partner for the last twelve years of his life.

She expresses great human depth as she comes barefoot, carrying her child like a peasant woman. Her left arm, his right arm and her flowing veil form a protective circle round the child. The child echoes his mother's apprehensive expression as he snuggles up to her. It is a profoundly human and this-worldly depiction.

The two angels at the bottom of the painting appear to have escaped from the heavenly hosts in the background but also look exceedingly human. The very original host of ghostly angels' faces crowding the background add to the forward drive of the Madonna, who seems to be walking right out of the painting.

Raphael died on his birthday, 8 April 1520, aged only thirty-seven, after eight days of illness from pneumonia and was buried the following day in the Pantheon. ★

END NOTES

Ireland without her people

DÓNALL Ó BRIAIN

“Ireland without her people is nothing to me,” James Connolly wrote in 1900. This phrase has been repeatedly quoted, in isolation, especially by those who wish to promote a workerist and non-national (or anti-national) view of James Connolly.

Anyone who reads the sentence intelligently can see that Connolly condemned those who claim to defend only the people or the complex of phenomena that we call “Ireland,” rather than both—as he did.

Earlier, Connolly had scathingly denounced “the patriot who won’t touch socialism.” Today we are more likely to encounter the socialist who won’t touch patriotism. A kind of socialism—even a kind of alleged Marxism—has been created that claims that national independence and sovereignty are of no consequence for the working class,

which should engage only in a “pure and simple” class struggle, leading no doubt to a pure and simple socialism.

In a colonial or neo-colonial country, such as ours, this emasculated view of socialism plays into the hands of imperialism and its local agents, who are fully aware that it presents no threat to their power.

Just before his death Connolly is believed to have said to his daughter: “The socialists will never understand why I am here; they will all forget that I am an Irishman.”

James Connolly made it clear in all his writings, and even more so in his life, that his commitment was to the whole range of phenomena that constitute a nation: the people, *together with* their history, their culture, their historical territory and its landscape. This is what is called patriotism.

Connolly made no bones about his Irish patriotism. Nor do we. ★

Working people’s stories in contemporary Ireland

Culture Matters is compiling a second anthology of working-class writing as a way for working people to creatively express their anxieties, experiences and thoughts about various aspects of their lives in these troubled times.

The collection will be made up of short prose, whether flash fiction, short stories, anecdotes, epigrams, memoirs, or other kinds of life writing: diary, letters, e-mail, essays, blogs, or images (black and white).

The deadline is 31 July 2020. Submissions should be sent to irishstories2020@yahoo.com.

Full details are available from Culture Matters at www.culturematters.org.uk.



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“I believe in China’s help. European solidarity is just a fairy tale.”

Aleksandar Vučić
president of Serbia

“It turns out that the only institution that works for the benefit of citizens in Europe is not the expensive European bureaucracy but the nation-state.”

Krasimir Karakačanov
minister for defence of Bulgaria

Picture: *China Daily*

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ISSN 0791-5217



9 770791 521008



16 Socialist Voice April 2020